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(54) **METHODS AND APPARATUS TO PROVIDE DYNAMIC MESSAGING SERVICES**

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See application file for complete search history.

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This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

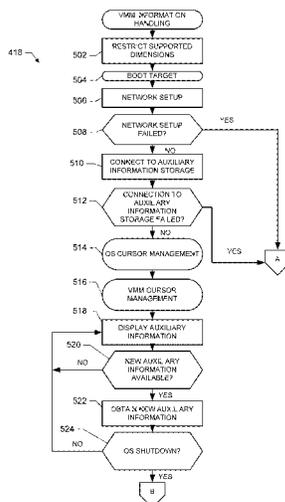
Methods and apparatus to provide dynamic messaging services are disclosed. An example method of displaying information on a display screen includes determining, using a virtual machine manager, supported dimensions for display of information on the display screen; generating, using the virtual machine manager, restricted dimensions that are less than the supported dimensions; providing the restricted dimensions to an operating system of a virtual machine supported by the virtual machine manager, wherein the restricted dimensions define a boundary between a first screen portion and a second screen portion; and using the virtual machine manager to display first information in the first screen portion, the virtual machine manager enforcing the presence of the first screen portion on the display screen.

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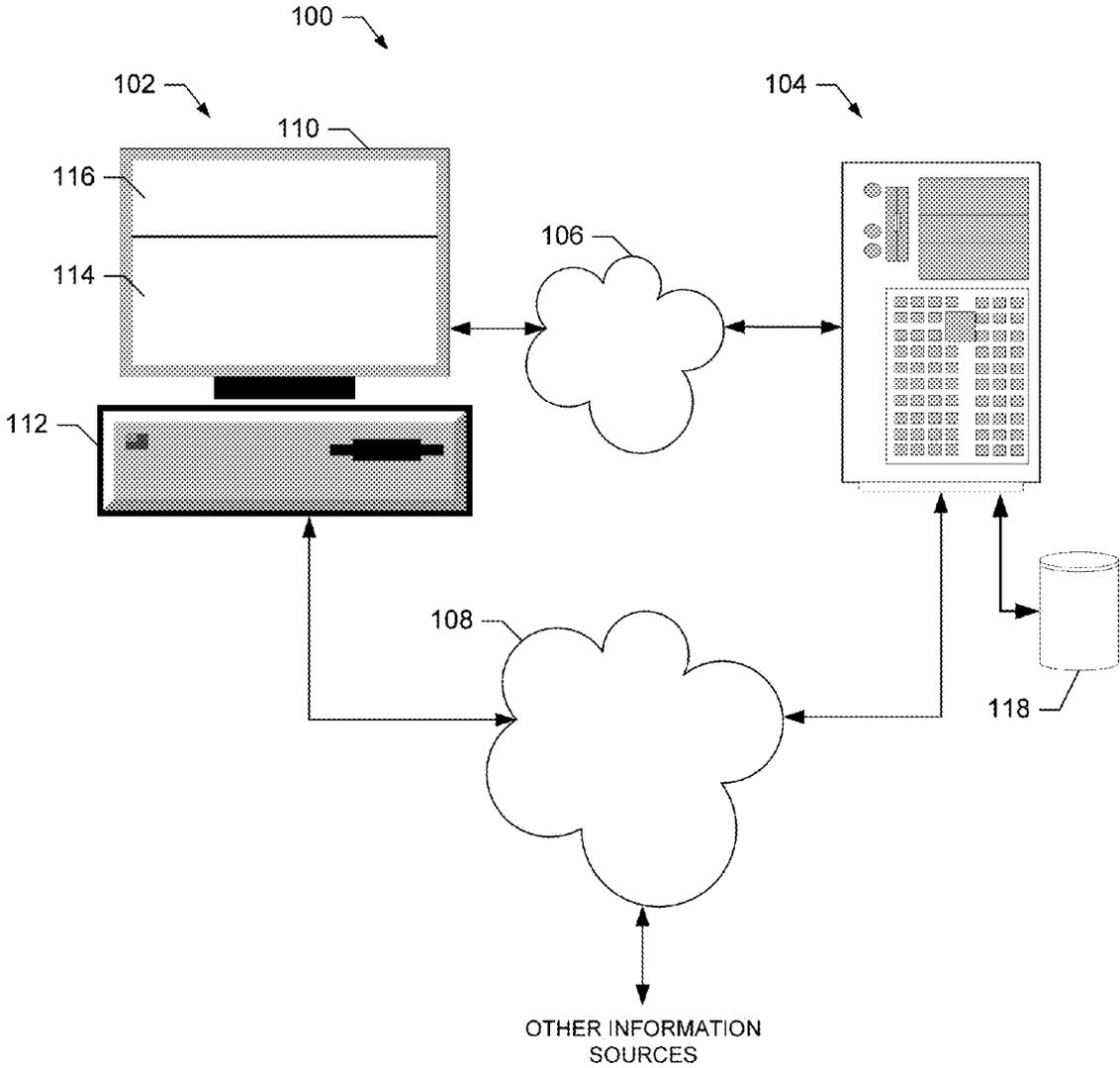


FIG. 1

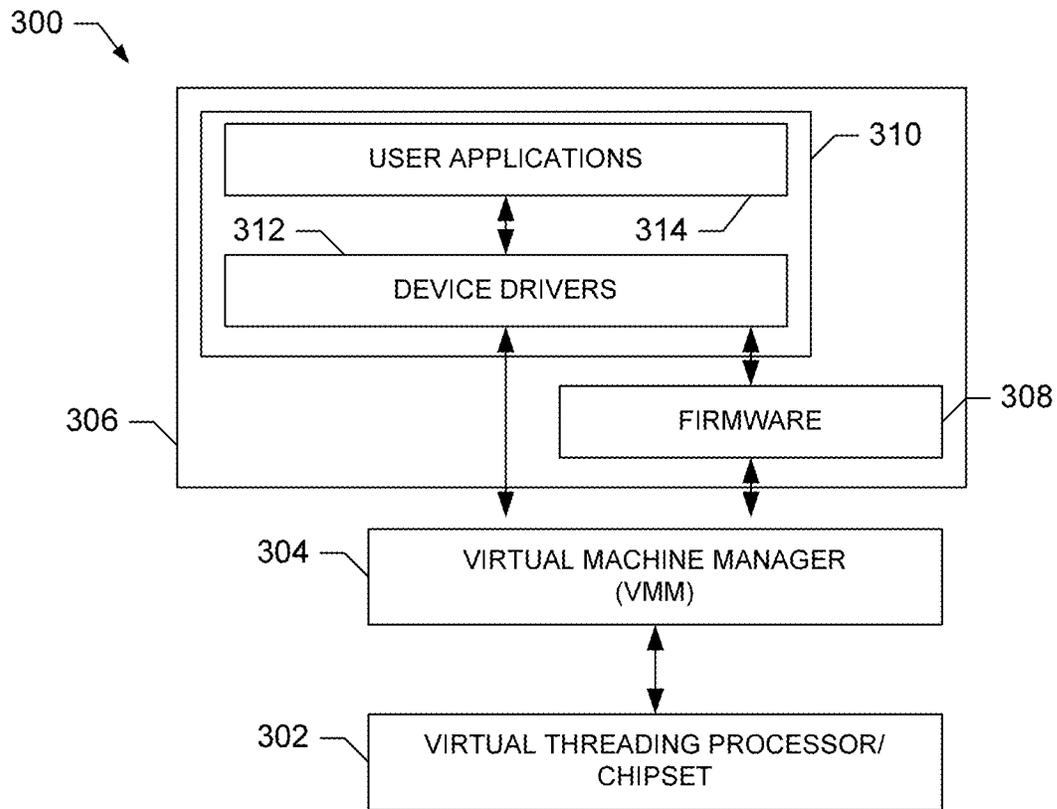


FIG. 3

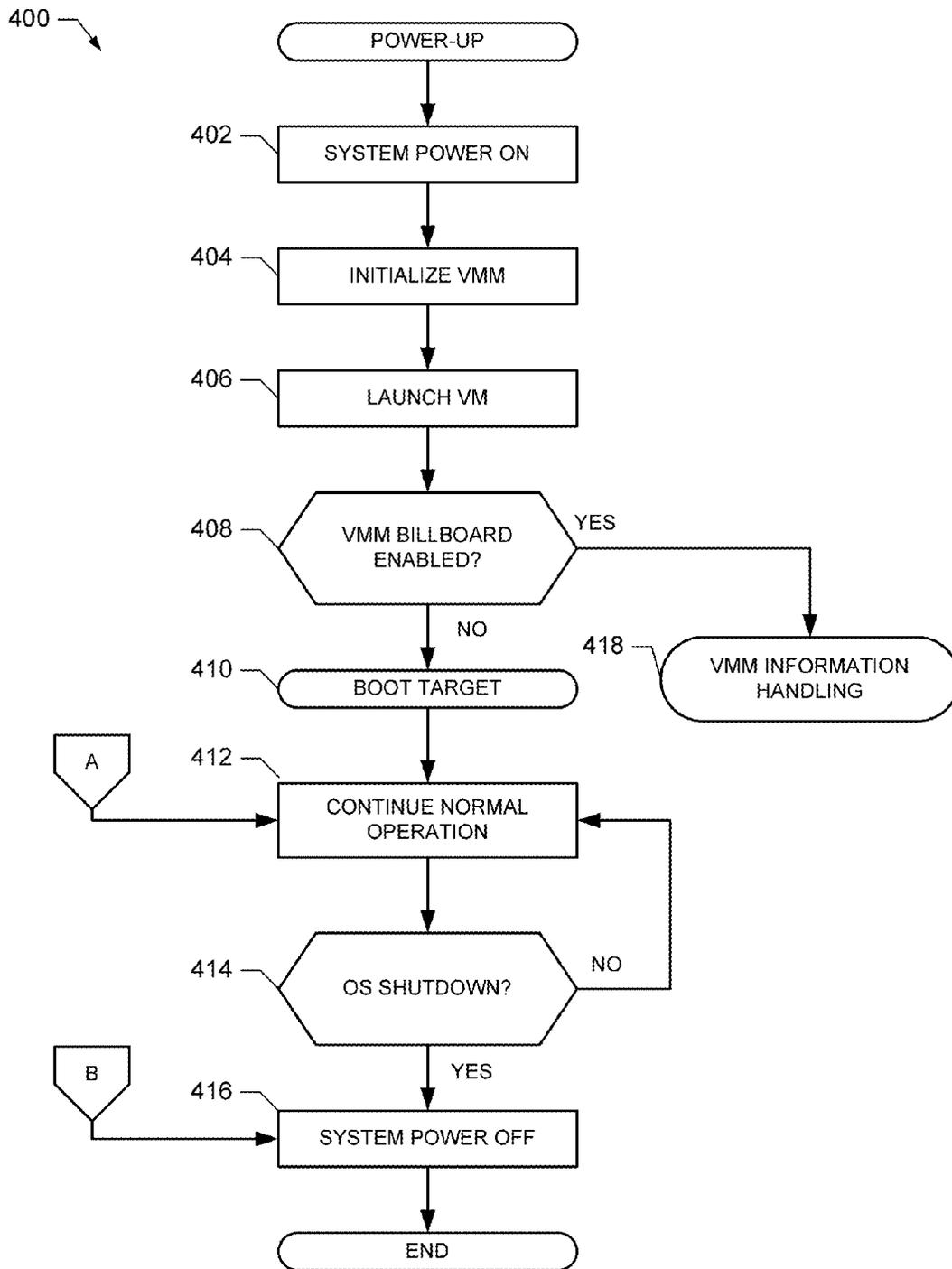


FIG. 4

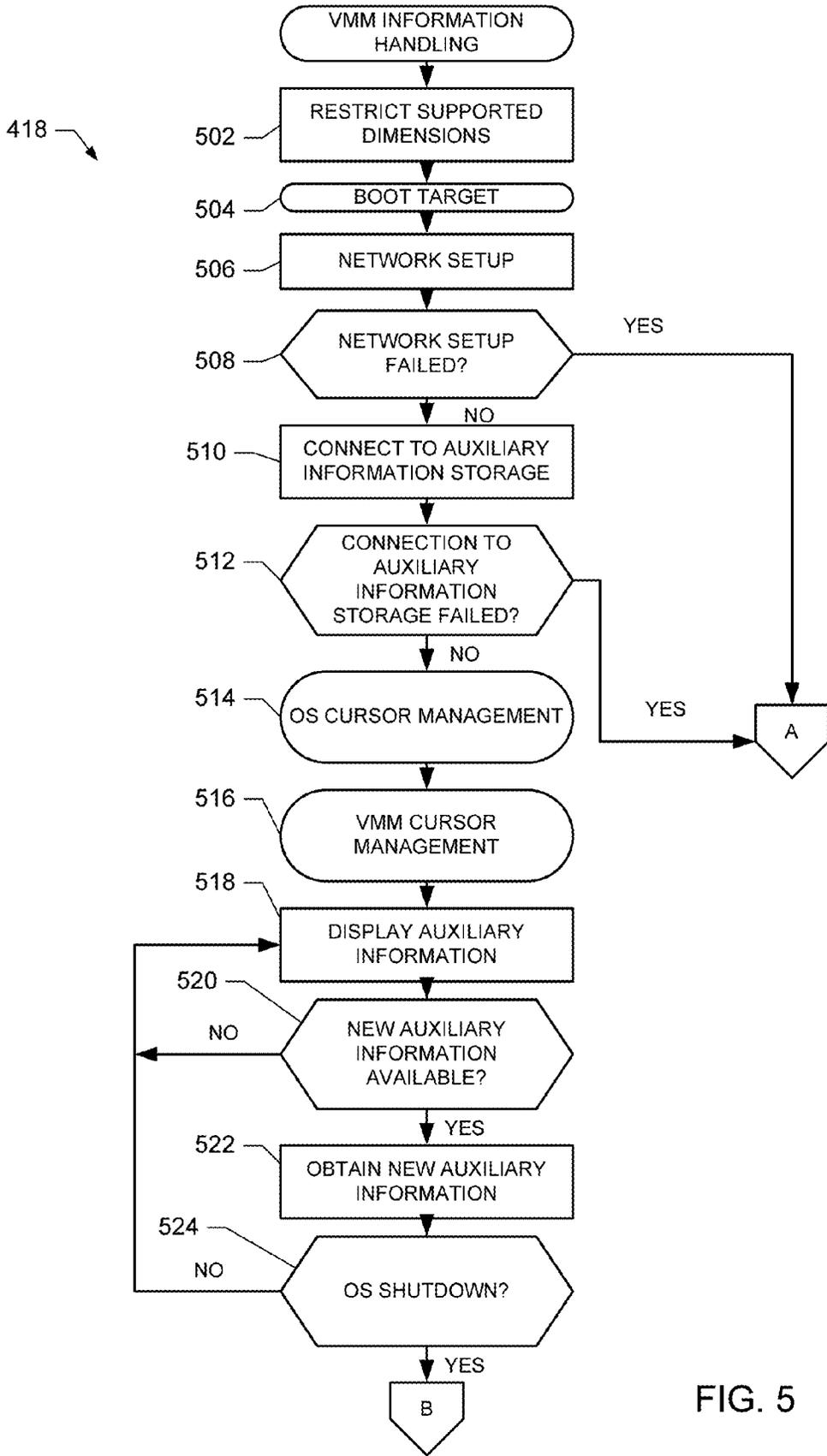


FIG. 5

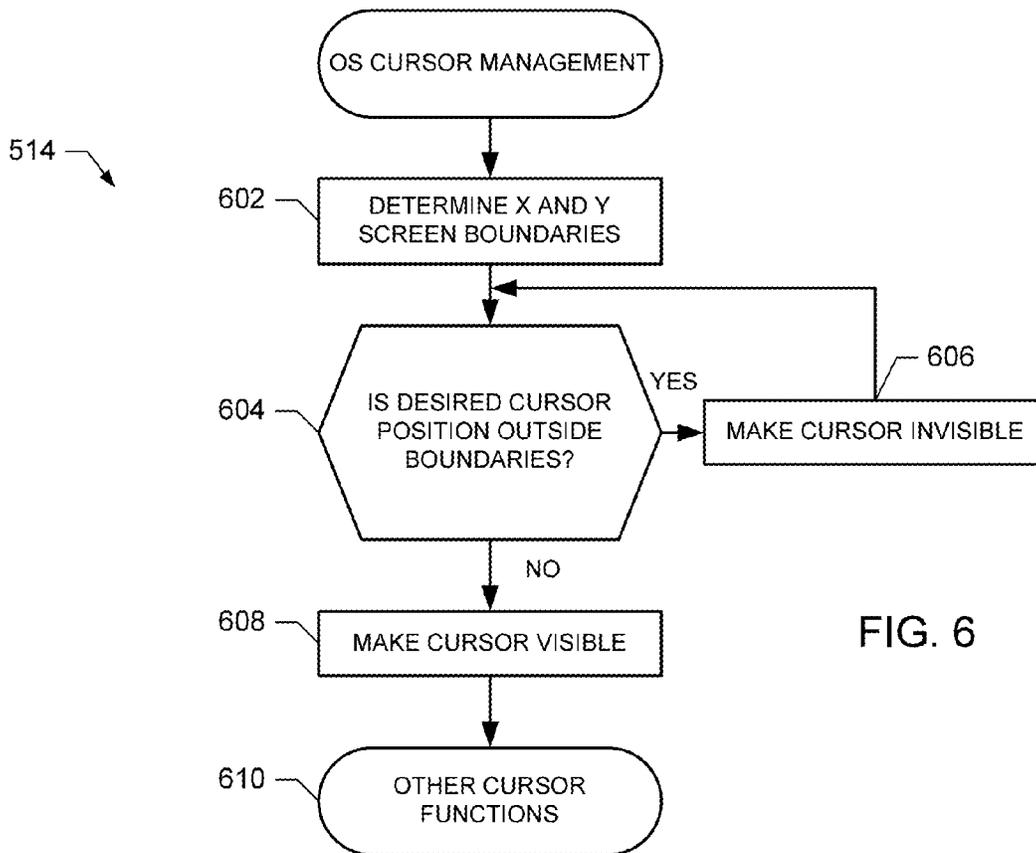


FIG. 6

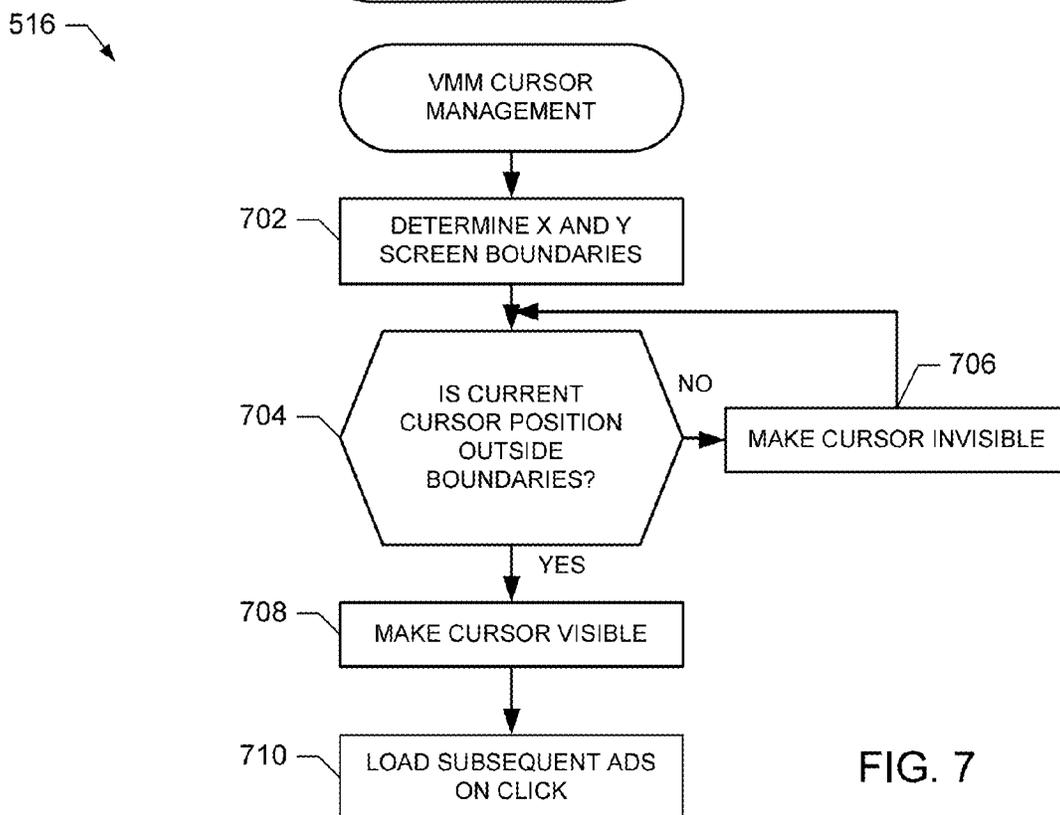


FIG. 7

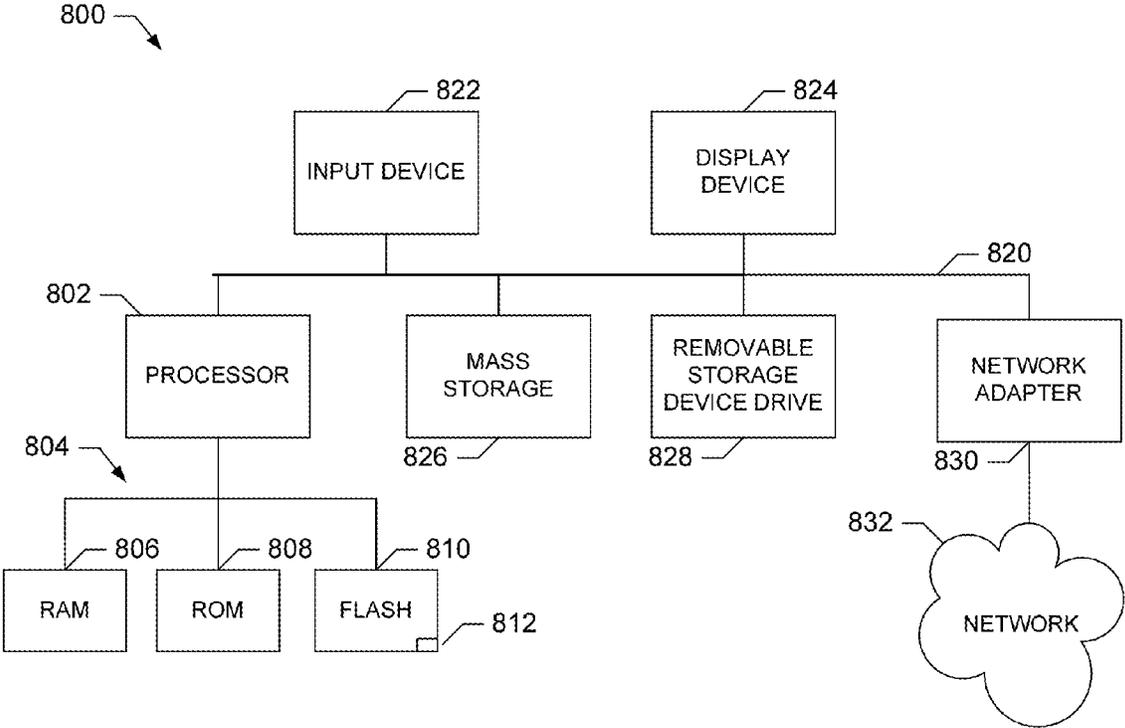


FIG. 8

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METHODS AND APPARATUS TO PROVIDE DYNAMIC MESSAGING SERVICES

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This patent arises from a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/722,088, filed Dec. 20, 2012, which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/426,727 (now U.S. Pat. No. 8,368,711), filed Jun. 27, 2006. The entireties of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/722,088 and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/426,727 are incorporated herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure pertains to processing systems and, more particularly, to methods and apparatus to provide dynamic messaging services.

BACKGROUND

Browsing networks, such as the Internet (also referred to as the “world-wide-web” or the “web”), for information has become a very popular technique for carrying out research activities. The Internet includes servers providing numerous sources of information for almost every topic imaginable. In addition to research activities, browsing Internet sites, which is commonly referred to as Internet surfing, has become a popular pastime.

Browsing Internet sites has achieved such a cultural status that public libraries and other publicly available resources now provide numerous terminals at which Internet browsing may be carried out. Additionally, many commercial establishments now provide web browsing capabilities. Internet cafés (I-Cafés) provide network connections to the Internet while patrons enjoy other products provided by the business. For example, a coffee shop or other business may include I-café functionality so that customers can browse the Internet while they enjoy their coffee. Furthermore, Internet access is now usually available at hotels.

In general, it is desirable to provide additional or auxiliary information to persons browsing the Internet. This information may take many forms, such as information on local events, alerts, or advertising. As will be readily appreciated by those having ordinary skill in the art, pop-up advertising is one popular technique for providing advertisements to persons browsing Internet web sites. For example, when a user directs his or her browser-equipped personal computer to logon to a desired web site to view requested information or content, the desired web site may cause the browser in use to open an additional pop-up window in which an advertisement is displayed. The user must then close the window including advertisement to resume viewing the desired content.

Many users find pop-up advertisements irritating. To that end, a number of software tools have been created to stop the occurrence of pop-up advertisements. These software tools are commonly referred to as pop-up blockers, and may reside on web browser tool bars or other convenient locations that enable users to selectively invoke the pop-up blocking feature.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a diagram of an example network computing system.

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FIG. 2 is a block diagram representing the functionality of one example implementation of a dynamic messaging service.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of example software layering that may be included within the terminal of FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of an example power-up process that may be carried out by the terminal of FIG. 1.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of an example virtual machine manager (VMM) information handling process.

FIG. 6 is a block diagram of an example operating system (OS) cursor management process.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of an example VMM cursor management process.

FIG. 8 is a block diagram of an example processor system on which the processes of FIGS. 4-7 may be implemented.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As described below, a portion of a computer system or terminal display screen may be allocated for display of information other than information requested by the user. This allocated portion of the display screen may be used for auxiliary content or information, such as, for example, advertisements that may be used to defray the cost of a network administrator (e.g., the administrator providing the terminal with which the display screen is associated). The allocation of the display screen to include portions of the display of both request content or information (e.g., or requested web page and auxiliary content or information, may be carried out at software/firmware architecture level of the terminal that is not accessible by an end user of the computer system or terminal. Accordingly, the allocated portion of the display screen may not be eliminated through actions of the user of the display screen.

As shown in FIG. 1, an example network computing system 100 generally includes a terminal 102 and a server 104. The terminal 102 and the server 104 may be coupled by one or more networks 106, 108. For example, the network 106 may be a local area network (LAN) or some other network configuration. The network 108 may be a network such as the Internet, which is also referred to as the World Wide Web. As will be readily appreciated by those having ordinary skill in the relevant art, other information sources such as computers, servers, and the like, may be coupled to the network 108.

In further detail, the terminal 102 includes a display screen 110 and a processing portion 112. As will be readily appreciated by those having ordinary skill in the art, the display screen 110 may be any display screen suitable to provide visual information to a viewer. For example, the display screen 110 may be a cathode ray tube (CRT), a liquid crystal display (LCD), or a display of any other suitable technology, such as a plasma display. Further, the display screen 110 may be a monitor such as is conventionally used with a personal computer, or may be a television-type display.

The processing portion 112 may include any suitable combination of hardware, software, and/or firmware. In accordance with one example, the processing portion 112 and the display screen 110 may be implemented as described below in conjunction with FIG. 8. As described below, the processing portion 112 is configured to display information in two distinct sections on the display screen 110. For example, the processing portion 112 may partition the display screen 110 into a requested content section 114 and an auxiliary information section 116. As described below, this partitioning may be sized, shaped, and located in any

manner desired and carried out by the processing portion **112** in a manner that is not modifiable by the end user of the terminal **102**. Thus, the end user of the terminal **102** will not be able to eliminate the auxiliary information section **116** from the display screen **110**. In one example described below, the partitioning carried out by the processing portion **112** provides dynamic information throughout an entire operating system (OS) deployment through the case of billboard services in a firmware virtual machine manager. Such an example arrangement allows for the provision of continuous auxiliary information, which, if desired, may be real-time, dynamic information. Additionally, in examples with the VMM obtaining and presenting the auxiliary information, such activities are OS agnostic and, therefore, it does not matter whether the terminal (e.g., the terminal **102** of FIG. 1) uses a Windows-type OS, a Linux-type OS, or any other OS.

The server **104** may be any computing device suitable to provide information to the terminal **102**. In one example implementation, the server **104** may have the architecture shown in FIG. 8. In the example of FIG. 1, the server **104** has access to auxiliary information storage **118** that is used to store information that may be presented in the auxiliary information section **116** of the display screen **110**. Thus, in contrast to pop-up advertisements from an Internet browser, which are out of administrators' control, the provision of information in the auxiliary information section **116** is completely under the control of the entity that manages information on the auxiliary information storage **118**.

The auxiliary information storage **118** may be located proximate the server **104**, such as on a mass storage device of the server. Alternatively, the auxiliary information storage **118** may be networked to the server **104** using, for example, either or both of the networks **106**, **108**. For example, the auxiliary information storage **118** may reside on another server that is coupled to the server **104** via the network **108**. Alternatively or additionally, more than one storage medium may be used to implement the information storage **118**. For example, the auxiliary information storage **118** may be implemented as one or more networked hard drives storing databases or other data constructs including the auxiliary information.

The information stored on the auxiliary information storage **118** may be of any suitable nature, such as, for example, advertisements, service bulletins, or any other content including text and/or graphics. Additionally, the auxiliary information may be plain text, figures, voice, or multimedia. Information may be selected for storage on the auxiliary information storage **118** by a network operator (e.g., an I-café owner, an original equipment manufacturer (OEM), an Internet service provider, etc.), a network administrator, and/or an advertiser. Such entities may control the addition and removal of content from the auxiliary information storage **118** from a remote location, such as a computer terminal located remotely from the auxiliary information storage **118**. In such an arrangement, such entities may upload content to the auxiliary information storage **118** so that the uploaded content may be subsequently retrieved and displayed in the auxiliary information section **116** of the display screen **110**.

As shown in FIG. 2, a graphics processing arrangement **200** includes a display attribute determiner **202**, a local graphics reader **204**, an auxiliary graphics reader **206**, a graphics renderer **208**, and an input device processor **210**. As will be readily appreciated by those having ordinary skill in the art, items **202**, **204**, **206**, **208**, and **210** may be implemented exclusively by hardware and/or by hardware execut-

ing software and/or firmware and/or by any combination of hardware, software, and/or firmware that may be implemented on, for example, the terminal **102** of FIG. 1. Additionally, some of the items of FIG. 2 may be implemented in a pre-boot (i.e., pre-OS) environment, whereas some items may be implemented in a post-boot (i.e., runtime) environment.

In operation, the display attribute determiner **202**, which may be implemented with the pre-boot environment, receives information from the system (e.g., from system hardware, software, and/or firmware) and determines attributes for displaying information on the display screen. In particular, the display attribute determiner **202** may determine available display space for displaying local graphics information, such as graphics related to a software application being operated by the user of the terminal **102** of FIG. 1. In an example implementation, the display attribute determiner **202** may determine that a display screen supports a resolution of 1600×1200 pixels in size, but that a portion of that size is to be reserved for auxiliary information. Thus, the display attribute determiner **202** may determine that only 1280×1024 pixels are allocated to the display of information requested by the user of the terminal **102** and that the balance of the display screen is reserved for the display of auxiliary information, hereby determining the location and size of the auxiliary information section **116**. The display attribute determiner **202** passes the display screen information to the graphics renderer **208** and the input device processor **210**, the functionality of each of which is described below.

The local graphics reader **204** receives from a local graphic processing system graphics corresponding to content to be displayed in response to the actions of the user of the terminal **102**. For example, if the terminal user has requested the display of a particular Internet web page or the use of a particular software application, the local graphics reader **204** receives data corresponding to the visual content corresponding to the Internet web page or the software application and passes this content to the graphics renderer **208**. The information provided to the graphics renderer **208** by the local graphics reader **204** may have dimension information included therein and such dimension information may be adjusted within the graphics renderer **208** in accordance with the information provided to the graphics renderer **208** by the display attribute determiner **202**.

The auxiliary graphics reader **206** receives auxiliary information from the auxiliary information storage **118**, which as described in conjunction with FIG. 1, may be coupled to the terminal **102** via a server **104** and one or more networks **106**, **108**. The auxiliary information may be, for example, text or graphics information and may include information that is purely informational (e.g., weather reports, store hours, etc.) or may include advertising information such as promotional information and the like. The auxiliary graphics reader **206** passes the auxiliary information to the graphics renderer **208**. As with the information from the local graphics reader **204**, the information from the auxiliary graphics reader **206** may include dimensional information in addition to the graphics and/or text information. This dimensional information may be adjusted by the graphics renderer **208** in accordance with the information the graphics renderer **208** receives from the display attribute determiner **202**.

As described above, the graphics renderer **208** receives information from both the local graphics reader **204** and the auxiliary graphics reader **206**. This information (i.e., information provided in response to user input and auxiliary information, is modified for display on a single screen by the

graphics renderer **208**. For example, because the display attribute determiner **202** informed the graphics renderer **208** that the display screen was 1600×1200 pixels in size, but that only 1280×1024 pixels of that display screen is allocated to local graphics, the graphics renderer **208**, in one example, adjusts the size and location of the information from the local graphics reader **204** so that such information may be located properly on the display screen. Additionally, the graphics renderer **208** may modify the auxiliary information to fit the balance of the 1600×1200 pixel screen size that is not occupied by the 1280×1024 pixels of local graphics information.

Although the provided example includes screen dimensions of 1600×1200 pixels and an allocation of 1280×1024 pixels for the display of the requested information, thereby leaving the balance of the display screen for auxiliary information, such an example is only a manner of allocating screen space. In fact, any allocation of screen space is contemplated. For example, the requested content section **114** may be smaller or larger than the auxiliary information section **116**. Additionally, the location of the auxiliary information section **116** may be above, below or to the left or right of the requested content section **114**. Further, matter of the sections **114**, **116** need be rectangularly shaped. In fact, the sections could be square shaped, L-shaped, or any other suitable shape.

The input device processor **210** receives information from an input device, such as a mouse or any other input device, and also receives information regarding various screen section dimensions and locations from the display attribute determiner **202**. The input device processor **210** handles generation of information representing the on-screen movement corresponding to an input device, such as, for example, the movement of a cursor on a screen in response to a user's movement of a mouse input device. In particular, the input device processor **210** handles the transitions between screen sections (i.e., between the requested content section **114** and the auxiliary information section **116**) because, as described herein, the administration of such sections may be handled by different entities such as a VMM or a Virtual Machine (VM). The information representative of where a cursor or any other visual indicator should be displayed is passed from the input device processor **210** to the graphics renderer **208** so that the visual indicator may be displayed on the screen.

In one example, the processing portion **112** of the terminal **102** of FIG. 1 may have an architecture **300**, such as that shown in FIG. 3. In particular, the architecture **300** may be based on a virtual threading processor/chipset **302** on which a VMM **304** operates. The VMM **304** supports one or more VM, one of which is shown at reference numeral **306** in FIG. 3. In one example, the VM **306** includes firmware **308** and an OS **310**, which includes one or more device drivers **312** and one or more user applications **314**.

The virtual threading processor/chipset **302** is a device or set of devices capable of supporting multiple threads of software execution, wherein computational resources are selectively allocated to the various threads of execution. One example virtual threading processor/chipset is the Intel Pentium 4 processor.

In one example, the VMM **304** is hardware executing software and/or firmware. As explained below, instructions may be stored in memory and executed by a processor to implement the VMM **304**, as well as to control the functionality of the VMM **304**. As will be readily appreciated by those having ordinary skill in the art, the VMM **304** erects and maintains a framework for managing virtual machines. In particular, the VMM **304** provides memory management,

interrupt handling, and thread scheduling services to the virtual machines (e.g., the VM **306**) it supports.

As described below in detail, the VMM **304** may report to the VM **306** the resources available for the execution of program instructions and/or the resources available for display of information. To that end, the VMM **304** may inform the VM **306** that a subset of resources is available when, in reality, the resources are fully available. For example, the VMM **304** may report to the VM **306** that the display screen resolution is 1280×1024 pixels in size when, in reality, the display screen is 1600×1200 pixels in size. By underreporting to the VM **306** the resources that are available, the VMM **304** can reserve such resources for its own use.

The VM **306** may be implemented using a dynamic programming language such as, for example, Java and for C#. A software engine (e.g., a Java Virtual Machine (JVM) and Microsoft .NET Common Language Runtime (CLR), etc.), which is commonly referred to as a runtime environment, executes the dynamic program language instructions of the managed application. The VM **306** interfaces dynamic program language instructions (e.g., a Java program or source code) to be executed and to a target platform (i.e., the virtual threading processor/chipset **302** and the OS **310**) so that the dynamic program can be executed in a platform independent manner.

Dynamic program language instructions (e.g., Java instructions) are not statically compiled and linked directly into native or machine code for execution by the target platform (i.e., the operating system and hardware of the target processing system or platform). Native code or machine code is code that is compiled down to methods or instructions that are specific to the operating system and/or processor. In contrast, dynamic program language instructions are statically compiled into an intermediate language (e.g., bytecodes), which may interpreted or subsequently compiled by a just-in-time (JIT) compiler into native or machine code that can be executed by the target processing system or platform. Typically, the JIT compiler is provided by the VM that is hosted by the operating system of a target processing platform such as, for example, a computer system. Thus, the VM and, in particular, the JIT compiler, translates platform independent program instructions (e.g., Java bytecodes, Common Intermediate Language (CIL), etc.) into native code (i.e., machine code that can be executed by the virtual threading processor/chipset **302**).

The firmware **308** within the VM **306** may be programmed to carryout tasks for the VM **306** prior to the VM **306** booting the OS **310** and its attendant device drivers **312** and user applications **314**. For example, the firmware **308** may be responsible for interfacing with the VMM **304** to determine the capabilities of hardware coupled to the virtual threading processor/chipset **302**. In particular, as described below, the firmware **308** may request an indication of display screen resolution from the VMM **304**. The firmware **308** may store the resource indications in a memory (e.g., random access memory (RAM)), so that when the OS **310** boots, the OS **310** will be aware of the system resources at its disposal.

As will be readily appreciated by those having ordinary skill in the art, the OS **310** may include the device drivers **312** that are in communication with the user applications **314**. The loading of the OS **310** causes the architecture **300** to leave the pre-boot phase of operating and to enter the runtime operating phase. The OS **310** learns what resources are at its disposal by reading the memory locations into which the firmware **308** stored the system information provided by the VMM **304**. Alternatively, the OS **310** may

communicate directly with the VMM 304 to obtain an indication of the available resources. The OS 306 is told what hardware resources are available by either the memory manipulated by the firmware 308 or by the VMM 304 and, thus, the OS 306 may be under an assumption that fewer or different resources are available than those resource actually available. For example, the memory location associated with the system and/or the VMM 304 may inform the OS 310 that the available space on the display screen is smaller than the actual available space on the display screen. Thus, the OS 310 will only attempt to write graphics to the reduced available space, thereby leaving a portion of the available space for other use by another entity such as the VMM 304.

Having described the architecture of one example system that may be used to provide dynamic messaging services, various processes are described. Although the following discloses example processes, it should be noted that these processes may be implemented in any suitable manner. For example, the processes may be implemented using, among other components, software, or firmware executed on hardware. However, this is merely one example and it is contemplated that any form of logic may be used to implement the systems or subsystems disclosed herein. Logic may include, for example, implementations that are made exclusively in dedicated hardware (e.g., circuits, transistors, logic gates, hard-coded processors, programmable array logic (PAL), application-specific integrated circuits (ASICs), etc.) exclusively in software, exclusively in firmware, or some combination of hardware, firmware, and/or software. Additionally, some portions of the process may be carried out manually. Furthermore, while each of the processes described herein is shown in a particular order, those having ordinary skill in the art will readily recognize that such an ordering is merely one example and numerous other orders exist. Accordingly, while the following describes example processes, persons of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that the examples are not the only way to implement such processes.

Referring now to FIG. 4, a power-up process 400 that may be carried out by a terminal, such as the terminal 102 of FIG. 1, is shown. In particular, the process 400 may be carried out by a processor system, such as the processor system 800 of FIG. 8. The power-up process 400 begins when the system powers on (block 402), which may be due to a power cycle event or due to a reset event. After the system power on (block 402), the process 400 initializes a VMM (block 404) to handle the resource allocation for one or more VMs.

After the VMM has been initialized 404, one or more VMs are launched (block 406). The process 400 then determines if the VMM billboard is enabled (block 408). The VMM billboard is a reference to dedicated screen space (i.e., the auxiliary information space 116 on the display screen 110 of FIG. 1) that is allocated to the display of auxiliary information.

If the VMM billboard is not enabled (block 408), the process continues its normal booting operation by booting a target OS (block 410) and continuing normal operation (block 412) until the OS shuts down (block 414). When the OS shuts down (block 414), the system powers off (block 416) and the process 400 ends.

Alternatively, if the VMM billboard is enabled (block 408), a VMM information handling process (block 418) is started. The VMM information handling process (block 418) may be carried out by the VMM, such as the VMM initialized at block 404 of FIG. 4.

As shown in FIG. 5 in further detail, according to one example, the VMM information handling process 418

begins by restricting the supported dimensions that are reported when an OS seeks to determine the supported dimensions of the display screen (block 502). According to one example, the process 418 may query hardware, such as a graphics display card, to determine the resolution and dimensional capabilities of such hardware. The supported dimensions are then restricted in accordance with the screen space that is to be allocated to the auxiliary information. For example, if the supported dimensions are 1600×1200 pixels, the process 418 may report that the supported dimension is 1280×1024 pixels. Thus, when the OS and its attendant hardware and software of a VM prepare to display information on the screen, the dimensions used for displaying information on the screen are 1280×1024 pixels.

After the supported dimensions have been restricted (block 502), a target is booted (block 504). The booting of the target causes an OS to be loaded on a VM, such as one of the VMs launched at block 406 of FIG. 4.

After or during booting of the target (block 504), the network connection is set up (block 506) to provide the process 418 access to auxiliary information, such as auxiliary information stored in the auxiliary information storage 118 of FIG. 1. For example, with reference to FIG. 1, the network connection may connect the terminal 102 to either or both of the network 106 and/or the network 108. The process then determines if the network setup attempted at block 506 failed (block 508). If the network setup failed (block 508), the system continues normal operation in the OS present domain (block 412 of FIG. 4).

If, however, the network setup did not fail (block 508) the process 418 attempts to connect to the auxiliary information storage (block 510) and the process 418 determines whether the connection to the auxiliary information storage failed (block 512). If the connection to the auxiliary information storage failed (block 512), the system continues normal operation in the OS present domain (block 412 of FIG. 4).

Alternatively, if the connection to the auxiliary information storage did not fail (block 512), the process 418 initiates the OS cursor management process (block 514). The initiation of the process 514 may include passing a request or instruction from the VMM to the VM running the OS so that the OS can run the OS cursor management process 514. After the OS cursor management process 514 is initiated, the process 418 commences a VMM cursor management process 516. Further detail regarding each of the processes 514 and 516 is provided below in conjunction with FIGS. 6 and 7.

Once the cursor management processes 514 and 516 have been initiated, the process 418 obtains and displays the auxiliary information (block 518). In one example, obtaining the auxiliary information may include downloading the auxiliary information from a remote physical location such as the auxiliary information storage and/or may include recalling the auxiliary information from a location that is local to the terminal 102. In one example, the auxiliary information that is obtained may be personal in nature and may be keyed to a login type or username used to log into the terminal 102 of FIG. 1. For example, if an I-Café owner registers users with some demographic information such as age/job/school major/etc., the auxiliary information may be targeted to that user when the user arrives at the terminal in question.

After auxiliary information is displayed (block 518), the process 418 determines whether new auxiliary information is available (block 520). If no new auxiliary information is available (block 520), the process 418 continues to display the previously-obtained auxiliary information (block 518).

However, if new auxiliary information is available (block 520), the process 418 obtains the new auxiliary information (block 522) and, if the OS is not going to shut down (block 524), displays the auxiliary information obtained at block 522. In one example, the originally obtained auxiliary information may be continuously displayed until a user clicks or otherwise selects the auxiliary information section 116 of FIG. 1. As noted above, the process 418 may obtain the auxiliary information by downloading and/or recalling the auxiliary information from memory.

If, however, the process 418 determines that the OS is to be shut down (block 524), the OS shuts down and the system powers off as shown at block 416 of FIG. 4.

While the foregoing describes an example in which auxiliary information is handled by a VMM, other techniques for handling auxiliary information are possible. For example, a second virtual machine may be provided and the VMM may restrict the supported dimensions of the second virtual machine. Thus, the VMM may determine the overall dimensions supported by the display device and may partition the supported dimensions of the display by restricting the dimensions provided to each of the first and second virtual machines. In this way, the first virtual machine may provide content for a first portion of the display screen (e.g., the requested content) and the second virtual machine may provide content for a second portion of the display screen (e.g., the auxiliary content).

Example OS and VMM cursor management processes are now described in further detail. In general, when the cursor lies within the screen boundary allocated to the OS and the VM, the cursor is made visible by the OS. However, when the user attempts to move the cursor off the screen allocated to the OS and VM and into the screen portion allocated to the auxiliary information and the VMM, the OS makes the cursor invisible within the screen allocated to the OS so that the cursor does not appear to be stuck at the boundary separating the screen portion allocated to the OS.

As shown in FIG. 6, the OS cursor management process 514 begins by determining the boundaries for the screen allocated to the OS (block 602). The process 514 then determines if the desired cursor position desired by the user is outside the boundaries (block 604). The desired cursor position may be determined by tracking the cursor position and the extent to which the user has moved the mouse a distance past the boundary between the desired content section (e.g., the section 114 of FIG. 1) and an auxiliary information section (e.g., the section 116 of FIG. 1). If the desired cursor position is outside the boundary, the OS makes the cursor invisible by making the coloring and texturing of the cursor match the coloring and texturing of the graphics behind the cursor (block 606). In the alternative, if the desired cursor position is not outside the boundaries (block 604), the process 514 makes the cursor visible (block 608). After the cursor is made visible, other cursor functions are carried out (block 610), which may include conventional cursor functions that are performed by an OS to provide cursor functionality.

As shown in FIG. 7, in one example the VMM cursor management process 516 determines the screen boundaries that were passed to the OS (block 702). This determination identifies the location of the desired content section and the location of the auxiliary information section. The process 516 then determines whether the cursor is in a position outside the boundaries (i.e., that the cursor is within the auxiliary information section (block 704). If the cursor is not outside the boundaries (i.e., is within the desired content section) (block 704), the process 516 makes the cursor

invisible (block 706) so that when the cursor is within the desired content section, another cursor is not shown at the boundary the desired content section and the auxiliary information section. The techniques for making the cursor invisible are well known, some of which are described above.

When the cursor transitions to a location outside the boundaries (i.e., the cursor is outside of the desired content section and, therefore, is inside of the auxiliary information section) (block 704), the process 516 makes the cursor visible (block 708). Optionally, when the cursor is within the auxiliary information section, subsequent or different information may be loaded into the auxiliary information section in response to a user click within the auxiliary information section (block 710).

As shown in FIG. 8, an example processor system 800, includes a processor 802 having associated memories 804, such as a random access memory (RAM) 806, a read only memory (ROM) 808, and a flash memory 810. The flash memory 810 of the illustrated example includes a boot block 812. The processor 802 is coupled to an interface, such as a bus 820 to which other components may be interfaced. In the illustrated example, the components interfaced to the bus 820 include an input device 822, a display device 824, a mass storage device 826, and a removable storage device drive 828. The removable storage device drive 828 may include associated removable storage media (not shown), such as magnetic or optical media. The processor system 800 may also include a network adapter 830.

The example processor system 800 may be, for example, a server, a remote device, a conventional desktop personal computer, a notebook computer, a workstation or any other computing device. The processor 802 may be any type of processing unit, such as a microprocessor from the Intel® Pentium® family of microprocessors, the Intel® Itanium® family of microprocessors, and/or the Intel XScale® family of processors. The processor 802 may include on-board analog-to-digital (A/D) and digital-to-analog (D/A) converters.

The memories 804 that are coupled to the processor 802 may be any suitable memory devices and may be sized to fit the storage and operational demands of the system 800. In particular, the flash memory 810 may be a non-volatile memory that is accessed and erased on a block-by-block basis.

The input device 822 may be implemented using a keyboard, a mouse, a touch screen, a track pad or any other device that enables a user to provide information to the processor 802.

The display device 824 may be, for example, a liquid crystal display (LCD) monitor, a cathode ray tube (CRT) monitor or any other suitable device that acts as an interface between the processor 802 and a user. The display device 824 includes any additional hardware required to interface a display screen to the processor 802.

The mass storage device 826 may be, for example, a conventional hard drive or any other magnetic or optical media that is readable by the processor 802.

The removable storage device drive 828 may be, for example, an optical drive, such as a compact disk-recordable (CD-R) drive, a compact disk-rewritable (CD-RW) drive, a digital versatile disk (DVD) drive, or any other optical drive. The removable storage device drive 828 may alternatively be, for example, a magnetic media drive. If the removable storage device drive 828 is an optical drive, the removable storage media used by the drive 828 may be a CD-R disk, a CD-RW disk, a DVD disk or any other suitable optical

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disk. On the other hand, if the removable storage device drive **48** is a magnetic media device, the removable storage media used by the drive **828** may be, for example, a diskette or any other suitable magnetic storage media.

The network adapter **830** may be any suitable network interface such as, for example, an Ethernet card, a wireless network card, a modem, or any other network interface suitable to connect the processor system **800** to a network **832**. The network **832** to which the processor system **800** is connected may be, for example, a local area network (LAN), a wide area network (WAN), the Internet, or any other network. For example, the network could be a home network, a intranet located in a place of business, a closed network linking various locations of a business, or the Internet.

Although certain apparatus constructed in accordance with the teachings of the invention have been described herein, the scope of coverage of this patent is not limited thereto. On the contrary, this patent covers every apparatus, method and article of manufacture fairly falling within the scope of the appended claims either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of displaying information on a display screen, the method comprising:

determining, using a virtual machine manager, supported dimensions for display of information on the display screen;

generating, using the virtual machine manager, restricted dimensions that are less than the supported dimensions; providing the restricted dimensions to an operating system of a virtual machine supported by the virtual machine manager, wherein the restricted dimensions define a boundary between a first screen portion and a second screen portion; and

using the virtual machine manager to display first information in the first screen portion, the virtual machine manager enforcing the presence of the first screen portion on the display screen by preventing a user of the virtual machine from eliminating the first screen portion.

2. A method as defined in claim **1**, wherein the determining of the supported dimensions using the virtual machine manager includes querying a hardware device associated with the display screen to determine the supported dimensions of the hardware device prior to booting the virtual machine.

3. A method as defined in claim **1**, further including displaying second information provided by the virtual machine on the second screen portion after booting the virtual machine.

4. A method as defined in claim **1**, further including displaying a first cursor in the first screen portion using the virtual machine manager in response to detecting that a cursor position is outside of the second screen portion using the virtual machine manager.

5. A method as defined in claim **4**, further including instructing the virtual machine to hide a second cursor in the second screen portion from view when displaying the first cursor in the first screen portion.

6. A method as defined in claim **4**, further including hiding the first cursor from view in response to detecting that the cursor position is within the second screen portion.

7. An apparatus to display information on a display screen, comprising:

a virtual machine manager implemented using a processor; and

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a storage device including computer readable instructions which, when executed, cause the virtual machine manager to at least:

determine supported dimensions for display of information on the display screen;

generate restricted dimensions that are less than the supported dimensions;

provide the restricted dimensions to an operating system of a virtual machine supported by the virtual machine manager, wherein the restricted dimensions define a boundary between a first screen portion and a second screen portion; and

display first information in the first screen portion while the virtual machine manager enforces the presence of the first screen portion on the display screen by preventing a user of the virtual machine from eliminating the first screen portion.

8. An apparatus as defined in claim **7**, wherein the instructions are to cause the virtual machine manager to query a graphics display device associated with the display screen to determine the supported dimensions of the graphics display device prior to booting the virtual machine.

9. An apparatus as defined in claim **7**, wherein the instructions are further to cause the virtual machine manager to display second information provided by the virtual machine on the second screen portion after booting the virtual machine.

10. An apparatus as defined in claim **7**, wherein the instructions are further to cause the virtual machine manager to display a first cursor in the first screen portion in response to the virtual machine manager detecting that a cursor position is outside of the second screen portion using the virtual machine manager.

11. An apparatus as defined in claim **10**, wherein the instructions are further to cause the virtual machine manager to instruct the virtual machine to hide a second cursor in the second screen portion from view when the virtual machine manager displays the first cursor in the first screen portion.

12. An apparatus as defined in claim **10**, wherein the instructions are further to cause the virtual machine manager to hide the first cursor from view in response to the virtual machine manager detecting that the cursor position is within the second screen portion.

13. A computer readable storage device comprising computer readable instructions which, when executed, cause a processor to at least:

determine, using a virtual machine manager, supported dimensions for display of information on a display screen;

generate, using the virtual machine manager, restricted dimensions that are less than the supported dimensions; provide the restricted dimensions to an operating system of a virtual machine supported by the virtual machine manager, wherein the restricted dimensions define a boundary between a first screen portion and a second screen portion; and

display first information in the first screen portion via the virtual machine manager; and

enforce the presence of the first screen portion on the display screen by preventing a user of the virtual machine from eliminating the first screen portion via the virtual machine manager.

14. A storage device as defined in claim **13**, wherein the instructions, when executed, cause the processor to query a graphics display card associated with the display screen to determine the supported dimensions of the graphics display card prior to booting the virtual machine.

15. A storage device as defined in claim 13, wherein the instructions, when executed, further cause the processor to display a first cursor in the first screen portion via the virtual machine manager in response to detecting that a cursor position is outside of the second screen portion. 5

16. A storage device as defined in claim 15, wherein the instructions, when executed, further cause the processor to instruct the virtual machine to hide a second cursor in the second screen portion from view when the virtual machine manager is displaying the first cursor in the first screen 10 portion.

17. A storage device as defined in claim 15, wherein the instructions, when executed, further cause the processor to hide the first cursor from view in response to detecting that the cursor position is within the second screen portion. 15

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